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A REPLY ^{4103. ad}
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TO THE OBJECTIONS

brought against the

Church of England,

IN

A LATE PUBLICATION,

entitled,

AN

ANSWER

TO THE

INQUIRY

Why are You a Dissenter?

By JOHN CROSSE, Vicar of BRADFORD.

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A REPLY, &c.

MY DEAR SIR,

I CAN assure you, with great truth, that Controversy is a thing by no means suited to my natural disposition, and is usually productive of more harm than good; besides, the ordinary duties of my office demand my constant and unremitting attention, and leave me no time to wade through this wide and unexplored field: But as yourself and other of my Parishioners, think it incumbent upon me to take some notice of the Pamphlet alluded to in the Title Page, and which I understand has been circulated with much industry among a certain description of Persons in this, and the neighbouring towns; I have, though reluctantly, complied with your wishes, and shall be happy if my weak endeavours may prove serviceable to the cause in which we are both embarked.

I shall not take upon me to assert that the Church of England is faultless, for what Church is, or that nothing might be altered for the better in her Ritual; but I totally deny, that she is, in any one *essential* point, a Dissenter from the Church of Christ; or that there is any thing in her Homilies, Liturgy, or Articles, which may not easily be reconciled to the Holy Scriptures. Thousands of God's dear Children have lived and died in her Communion; and, in the judgment of many of THESE, the writer of the Pamphlet would have employed his

talents more usefully, by *opposing* the lukewarmness, indevotion, and wordly spirit, so conspicuous among Professors in general, than by *exposing* the imperfections and failings of any particular Church, or Society of Christians. But, let it not be inferred from this, that abuses and corruptions are to be tolerated in any Church—God forbid. “*Fiat justitia ruat Cælum*”!! And, had our opponent wrote a PHILIPPIC against the enormities of this kind, which have crept into the Establishment; he would have merited the thanks and commendation of every friend to Virtue and Religion, Churchman or Dissenter: Whereas, his *present Publication* can answer no other purpose, than to rekindle those embers of a narrow party spirit, which some late occurrences had given us good reason to hope were gradually dying away.

But to proceed with our design. The first general principle, says the writer of the Pamphlet, on which we found our dissent,* is this, “*That no civil Magistrate can have any Right, Authority, or Power, over the Consciences and Religion of Men: That his claiming to himself the interpretation of the Scriptures, which contain the Christian Religion, is assuming a power with which no civil magistrate can be invested, without directly opposing the very genius and spirit of that divine Religion which it pretends to establish.*” And pray what right, authority, or power, does the civil magistrate, in this country exercise over the conscience of this Complainant? Is he not allowed to erect a Chapel, or

* No man ought to be despised or even BLAMED, for his dissenting from the established Religion of his Country, provided he acts from PRINCIPLE; but he is certainly to be blamed for endeavouring to prejudice the minds of others against THAT Religion, by mis-representations, and false conclusions; and by calling in the Aids of Ridicule and Satire.

place of public Worship in any part of the kingdom? Is he not allowed also in that Chapel to INTERPRET THE SCRIPTURES agreeable to his own ideas, and to make as many converts to his own opinions as he can? Is not his person and property protected? Is he not, as a Minister of the Gospel, exempted from various burthensome offices, which fall indiscriminately on the Laity? What then can he desire more? The civil magistrate puts no disgraceful yoke on *his* neck; or makes any encroachment on *his* conscience: If *he* cannot embrace the Doctrines, or conform to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, let him depart in peace, and quietly enjoy that religious Liberty which the Laws of his Country secure to him. The civil magistrate does no more than what is allowed to every master of a family, *viz.* to choose his servants out of what denomination he pleases.

“ But, besides what the writer of the Pamphlet calls this undue influence on the minds of men, from the assumed authority of the CIVIL MAGISTRATE, He has many other reasons for his dissent from the Church of England: * And, He particularly instances, in her DOCTRINES, in her SPIRIT, in her CONSTITUTION, and in some of her OFFICES and FORMS of public Worship.”

* The Government of this Country has thought proper to make the Episcopal Church under its Patronage, and hence it is called the Church of England; but there is no more NECESSARY connection between the Episcopal Church and the State, than between the Presbyterian, or the Independent, or the Baptist Church. In Scotland, a member of the Episcopal Church is considered as a Dissenter; and in America, where there is no Established Church, many adhere to the Liturgy of the Church of England, so called.

I.

AS TO HER DOCTRINES,

“ In the XX ART. it is affirmed, That the Church hath power to decree Rites and Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith; and in virtue of this authority, she teaches and obliges all her Bishops and Clergy, to teach and solemnly to subscribe as in the presence of Almighty God, That whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the FAITH contained in what is called the Athanasian Creed; which FAITH, except every one doth keep whole and undefiled, he shall, without doubt, perish everlastingly. Now what is this but downright POPERY? Admit but the truth of this proposition, *i. e.* That the Church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in controversies of FAITH, and the glorious Reformation must have been unjustifiable, unrighteous, and schismatical; and Luther, Calvin, Ridley, Cranmer, &c. by presuming to oppose their private opinions to the decisions of the Church, were guilty of REBELLION against ecclesiastical authority, and all the Protestants stand condemned of the same crime, and are partakers in their guilt.”

To refute at once this calumny, I shall only transcribe the *whole* of the twentieth article, and the latter part of the thirty-fourth article.

ARTICLE XX.

“ The Church hath power to decree Rites and Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith; And yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's Word written; neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore although the Church be a witness and a keeper of holy writ, yet as it ought not to decree any thing

against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of salvation."

ARTICLE XXXIV.

"Every particular or national Church hath authority to ordain, change, and abolish ceremonies or rites of the Church, ordained only *by man's authority*, so that all things be done to edifying."

'Tis plain then the Church of England is as remote from Popery as candor from Bigotry: She refers all her decisions to the word of God, and allows to every other Church, particular, or national, the very same privilege which she claims for herself—She has thought proper, it is true, to adopt, what is generally called, the Athanasian Creed into her service, and that Creed confines Salvation to such only as believe in the TRINITY; but then there is a manifest distinction between confining Salvation to a particular Church, and confining it to a particular Doctrine. There can be but ONE TRUE FAITH, any more than ONE TRUE GOD, and Christ says, "He that believeth not shall be damned. The matter then, my dear Sir, is at Issue: For my own part, I am willing with our Church to stand or fall with the author of this Creed, notwithstanding our Opponent, in the excess of his charity, calls him a proud ignorant man.* The language is certainly strong, but not at all too strong when we are acquainted with the verbal subtilties, which have been made use of in this controversy.—It is also to be remembered, that when it is said in the

* It is generally supposed that this Creed was drawn up by Hilary, Archbishop of Arles, a person of great worth and learning, in the 5th-Century: He was equally conspicuous for defending the rights of his SEE against the encroachments of Leo Bishop of Rome, as he was for defending the FAITH of the Church against the tenets of Arius and his followers.

Creed, " He therefore that will be saved must *thus* think of the Trinity; the author does not advert to every particular proposition in the explanation of the Creed, as our Opponent would insinuate, but to the words immediately preceding, *i. e.* So that in all things, as is aforesaid (in the beginning of the Creed) the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped—:" And let our Adversaries say what they please, this is the bulwark of Christianity; the very corner stone of the whole fabric. Take this away and Deism, under various disguises, rushes in at once like an impetuous torrent bearing down all the other doctrines of our most holy Religion before it.

As to the objections brought against the Burial Service, and the Absolution pronounced by the Priest, I shall notice them in their proper place.

II. OF THE SPIRIT OF THE CHURCH.

" The spirit of Jesus Christ is catholic, tolerant, liberal, breathing universal love; its characteristics are mutual condescension, bearing with one another's different sentiments in religion, holding the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves; receiving one another, but not to doubtful disputations, &c. But is this the spirit which the Church of England breathes? adds our opponent." I do not pretend to justify every thing which has been said or done by the members of the establishment, much less that crooked policy which shut the doors of the Church against so many worthy characters in the last century; but any person who has read the history of those times will recollect, that the Puritans themselves, when in power, a few years before, set the example, and deprived more than 5000

Clergymen of their livings, among whom was the great and good Bishop Hall, with many other able Ministers of the New Testament, whose names will be found written in the Lamb's book of life.* But suppose our Bishops and Archbishops were even now as intolerant and illiberal as the Roman Pontiffs in the dark ages preceding the Reformation, the Church is not answerable for the misconduct of her rulers. On this principle the Jewish Church, in the time of our Saviour, might be called intolerant and illiberal, because the high Priest Caiphas and his venal associates were men of this description, and the Presbyterian Church might be called intolerant and illiberal, because her Ministers in New England persecuted several of the people called Quakers, to death : And the Baptists may be called intolerant and illiberal, because they will not admit any man, however orthodox in principle, and holy in conversation, to sit down with them at the table of their common Lord, unless he has been baptized,† when an Adult, and that, by plunging the whole body into water. But the Church of England must be more intolerant and illiberal than either Presbyterian,

* A certain description of men, in these Kingdoms, have been very anxious to keep up in the minds of their adherents the cruelties exercised towards the Puritan Ministers in the last century ; but let any one read WALKER'S SUFFERINGS OF THE CLERGY, during the time of the Commonwealth, and the Protectorate of Cromwell, when the PURITANS were in power, and he will lament to see exactly the same narrow, persecuting party spirit influencing all THEIR measures, which is so justly reprobated in the EPISCOPALIANS : So hard it is to separate power, and the improper exercise of that power.

† The greek word BAPTIZO is used not only to signify dipping or plunging into water ; but also for washing and sprinkling : Thus the Israelites are said to be baptized in the CLOUD and in the Sea ; that is, the waters being raised up, and standing as a wall on either side, the people were sprinkled by them as they passed along.

Baptist, or Independent, because she will not permit foreign divines, or others into her pulpits without their having previously declared their assent and consent to the XXXIX Articles. I should be extremely sorry to come under the suspicion of being intolerant and illiberal, but we must not give up our Faith, and deny our God to avoid the reproach, or gain the esteem of any set of men whatever ; and I heartily wish, that no ministers might find admission into our pulpits, save such, as not only assented and consented to the truth of these articles, but also preached the peculiar Doctrines set forth in them.

The world was not turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God by the Ethics of Aristotle, but by the preaching of Christ crucified ; and the *beloved* Disciple says, " If there came any unto you, and bring not this *Doctrine*, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed, is a partaker of his evil deeds.

III.

OF THE CONSTITUTION.

of the

CHURCH of ENGLAND.

" The Church of Jesus Christ is a holy catholic Church, and the communion of saints, a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered." These are the words of the XIX. Article, and I will defy our opponent, to give a better definition of the Church of Christ than what is contained in this article : But it is asked : " Is the Church of England such a Church ? Doth she not by her

' Test-Law, receive into her bosom multitudes of
 ' the most debauched, profligate and profane men,
 ' and in effect compel them to come and partake of
 ' her most holy Rites, and to eat and drink at the
 ' table of that Lord whose name they blaspheme,
 ' and whose Religion they abhor ?" Alas ! what
 pitiful shifts will not prejudice cause sensible men to
 have recourse to in order to support a favourite sys-
 tem ? Does not this Querist recollect, that the Test-
 Law was enacted, not by the authority or advice of
 the Church, but by the authority of Parliament, and
 that too a century after the Church had assumed its
 present Constitution. The Church commands her
 ministers, on the Sunday preceding the celebration
 of the Lord's supper, to denounce the most dreadful
 threatenings against all who will presume to receive
 unworthily ; and if they know any of their parish-
 ioners to be open and notorious evil livers, or such as
 have done any wrong to their Neighbours by word
 or deed, so that the Congregation be thereby offen-
 ded, having knowledge thereof, they shall advertise
 them that in any-wise they presume not to come to
 the Lord's table, until they have openly declared
 themselves to have truly repented and amended
 their former naughty life, and that they have recom-
 menced the parties to whom they had done wrong, or
 at least declare themselves to be in full purpose so to
 do, as soon as they conveniently may. The can-
 did reader will from this statement of facts, easily
 perceive that the Church has nothing to do with
 the Test-Act, and that so far from compelling de-
 bauched, profligate and profane men to partake of
 her most holy Rites, she absolutely forbids her Mini-
 sters to admit any such to her Altars ; nor does the
 Legislature compel *them* to do this : The Legisla-
 ture indeed requires all persons holding employ-
 ments under the crown, to receive the Lord's sup-

per according to the usage of the church of England; but the Clergy are left in possession of the same ecclesiastical power they had before the passing of the Test-Act. It must however be acknowledged, that this is a very delicate point: A man may be a great sinner to-day, and a great saint to-morrow, and it is worthy of notice, that our divine Master though perfectly acquainted with the guilt and ingratitude of his treacherous companion, yet delivered to Judas the consecrated elements just before he went out to betray him.* The Tares and the wheat will grow together until the harvest; and in the very days of the Apostles some eat and drink unworthily.

IV.

OF THE OFFICE OF BAPTISM.

"This, in the judgment of our opponent, is liable to insuperable objections, little better than solemn farce; for first the child is declared to be born in original sin, and in the wrath of God, and deserves to be damned. God is said to be angry with the infant, tho' not guilty of any actual transgression, *angry even to wrath*; and it is in danger under *this wrath*, of sinking into *everlasting damnation*: And how is it to be delivered from this dreadful

* I am well aware that some eminent Divines, have taken great deal of pains to invalidate this fact, because it militates against their peculiar Tenets: But this only serves to shew the weakness and inconsistency of man. In the xxii. chap. of St. Luke v. 21. Christ says POSITIVELY, after he had delivered the bread and wine, "Behold the hand of him that betrayeth me is with ME ON THE TABLE." See also Matt. xxvi. v. 26. "As they were eating, &c."



